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SUBJECT: ROMANIAN PRESIDENT PROPOSES NEW NATIONAL SECURITY
STRATEGY - INCLUDING POSSIBILITY OF "PREEMPTIVE"
ANTI-TERROR STRIKES

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES THOMAS L. DELARE FOR REASONS 1.4 A, B,
AND D

1. (C) Summary. President Traian Basescu is scheduled to propose within the next month a national security strategy for Parliamentary approval reflecting the findings of the February 28 meeting of the inter-ministerial Supreme Council of National Defense (CSAT). Responding to five principal threats to Romania's national security, the CSAT'S proposed security strategy includes a controversial provision explicitly authorizing the use of extraterritorial "preventive action" to combat "structured international terrorism." "Bad governance," including "corrupt state institutions" are among other threats to national security. The CSAT also reaffirmed the GOR's commitment to the NATO alliance and underscored the importance of a "coherent, strategic program" to promote GOR interests in the Black Sea region. So far, the preemptive strategy seems to have only a weak endorsement from Foreign Minister Ungureanu. This may have repercussions if the assertive Basescu interprets lack of enthusiasm as opposition. End Summary.

Preempting International Terrorism?

2. (SBU) President Basescu presided February 28 over the first meeting during his presidency of Romania's Supreme Council for National Defense (CSAT), an inter-ministerial body whose members include the Prime Minister, Ministers of Defense, Foreign Affairs and Interior, and heads of the intelligence services.

3. (SBU) According to the communique, the CSAT agreed that Romania needs a new national security strategy and identified five principle threats facing Romania: "structured international terrorism. . . , proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, totalitarian regimes that support terrorism, crises occurring in Romania,s strategic proximity (frozen conflicts or politically unstable situations), and bad governance, of which an important element is the level of corruption within the state institutions." Referring to anti-terror measures, the CSAT communique states that &Romania must decide whether it, along with its allies, takes action preemptively outside the national borders or limits itself to a reactive policy.8 The communique notes that a &final decision8 on this issue will be adopted within thirty days and states that Basescu, "in his capacity as CSAT president, argued for preventive action" against international terrorism.

4. (SBU) Mircea Geoana, FM in the former Social Democratic Party (PSD) government and current Senate Foreign Policy Commission President, publicly criticized CSAT's "radical and brutal" change to Romania's national security strategy, and cautioned in a newspaper interview against involving Romania in &distant conflicts" aimed at fighting terrorism. Basescu rejoined March 7 that Romania should modernize its national security strategy, adopted in 2001, to reflect current realities. Citing Romania's engagement in Iraq, he observed that Romania's military presence there is not, in fact, grounded in the current national security strategy that focuses on "reaction" to terrorism rather than preventive measures. On the other hand, FM Razvan Ungureanu stated in testimony before Geoana's Foreign Policy Commission that discussions about possible GOR reactions to international terrorism are &mere intellectual exercises.8 In a March 7 news conference, Ungureanu asserted that his mandate includes implementing a direct and forward leaning foreign policy leaving us a bit confused as where the FM really stands on what may be a key foreign policy position.

5. (SBU) Most media reaction to the CSAT communique focused on the possibility of "preventive action." Media analysts' response to the possibility of the GOR taking preemptive extraterritorial action against international terrorism mostly followed partisan lines. For example, a commentator in independent but frequently pro-PSD national daily newspaper "Adevarul" described Basescu as the leader of a weaker country that joins "the hooligan with the biggest club (the U.S.)." A headline in the same newspaper observes that the "Mouse (Romania) Marches Next to the Elephant (U.S.)."

NATO Alliance, Secret Police Archives, Black Sea

16. (SBU) The CSAT reaffirmed the importance of aligning Romanian and NATO policy and underscores that Romania is a "European ally with a transatlantic vocation." According to the CSAT communique, Romania will remain engaged in the gradual extension of the NATO mission in Afghanistan, training of the future Iraq army, and expansion of NATO's role in combating terrorism and WMD proliferation. The CSAT communique notes that the Council "analyzed the development of the Romanian-U.S. strategic partnership." The CSAT concluded that Romania must develop a "coherent strategic program" to promote national interests in the Black Sea region. The communique also states that Romania will participate in efforts to promote democracy and European values to the Western Balkans. The CSAT communique also urged the intelligence services to implement a long overdue provision of law governing the disposition and custody of communist era secret police archives, including files kept on individuals by the notorious "Securitate."

The Next Step

17. (C) Romanian law requires parliamentary approval of the national security strategy and, according to sources close to Basescu, the Presidency will submit its proposed national security strategy within the next month, likely reflecting the points underscored by CSAT and intended to replace and update the strategy Parliament approved in 2001. If former FM Geoana's reaction is an accurate barometer, evocation of "preemptive" anti-terror measures could release a storm of parliamentary opposition from the former ruling party, the PSD, as well as the extreme nationalist Greater Romania Party (PRM).

18. (C) Comment. The CSAT's "preemptive provision" reflects Basescu's personal imprint and demonstrates that the president will continue to play a proactive and engaged role in developing Romania's foreign policy. One Basescu adviser asserted to us that the president raised this topic with the express intent of generating a genuine debate on national security issues. Other themes addressed by CSAT - declassification of secret police archives, the centrality of the NATO alliance, and heightened attention to the Black Sea region - gibe with Basescu's recent public statements and campaign pledges. Additionally, the communique's linkage of "bad governance" and "the corruption of state institutions" echoes Basescu's presidential campaign assertion that corruption threatens national security. According to a Basescu adviser as well as media analysts, the president is impatient that the government is moving too slowly with reforms, including passing legislation that would criminalize tax evasion. Thus, the CSAT reference to "bad governance" may also be an unobvious exhortation to PM Calin Popescu-Tariceanu's government to step up the fight against corruption. End Comment.

19. (U) Amembassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNET Website:
www.state.gov/p/eur/bucharest
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